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S E C R E T AMMAN 006699

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV IZ SY JO

SUBJECT: MUASHER ON CAIRO AL MINISTERIAL: SHARA, IRAQ AND THE QUARTET ROADMAP

Classified By: Amb. Edward W. Gnehm for reasons 1.5 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) NEA DAS David Satterfield called on Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher November 13. Ambassador, PolCounts, Muasher's personal aide Ali al-Ayed, and private office staffer Ashraf Zeitoun also attended.

ARAB LEAGUE PRESSES IRAQ TO ACCEPT 1441

¶12. (S) Muasher said that the Cairo Arab League ministerial meeting had dealt mostly with Iraq. Most delegations had urged Iraqi FonMin Sabri to announce official Iraqi acceptance of UNSCR 1441 at the meeting, but Sabri said he had no specific guidance from Baghdad. His only substantive comment on 1441 was that "Iraq has always accepted the return of inspectors -- the rest of the resolution is technical detail that we are studying." Muasher said Saudi FonMin Prince Saud pressed hard for quick Iraqi acceptance of 1441, arguing that if Iraq did so, the AL could "lend support and make Iraq's case."

SHARA ON SYRIA'S UNSC VOTE ON IRAQ

¶13. (S) Muasher commented that Syrian FonMin Shara gave a long intervention explaining Syria's UNSC vote for 1441. Shara said Syria had worked within the tight "margins of movement" set by UNSC members, and had tried to improve the resolution as much as possible. Shara claimed that Syria had gotten assurances from (unnamed) permanent UNSC members that this resolution would not be used as a pretext to launch military action against Iraq. Syria voted for the resolution because it needed to remain within the international consensus on Iraq. Shara, Muasher said, concluded by asking Iraq to comply with 1441.

SYRIA ON 1441 EQUATES TO JORDAN ON ROADMAP?

¶14. (S) Muasher commented "We are always under pressure from Syria for giving in to less than perfect initiatives." He said that, following Shara's statement, he spoke and compared Syria's efforts in the UNSC to improve UNSCR 1441 with Jordan's efforts with the Quartet to improve the MEPP Roadmap. Muasher said he argued that the Roadmap will not be perfect from an Arab point of view, but Jordan, like Syria in the UNSC, must work within externally imposed boundaries. In the end, however, Jordan had had "the time to coordinate with our Arab brothers that Syria did not have."

¶15. (S) This comment, an obviously amused Muasher said, made Shara "climb right up the wall." Shara responded that there, in reality, was no such thing as a road map -- he had asked A/S Burns to see a copy when he last traveled to Damascus and had gotten no response. Muasher said he shot back that the Roadmap, once publicly announced and endorsed by the Quartet, would be the considered opinion of the international community on the Peace Process and Syria would have to accept it. "Don't pretend it doesn't exist," Muasher said he argued, "Try to improve it." Muasher ended by observing that the Ba'ath party in general -- and the Syrian Ba'ath in particular -- fostered a mentality that was very hard to reconcile with reality.

¶16. (U) Amb. Satterfield has cleared this message.
GNEHM